113, 101, 197, 162

Abchas RI3

/For information on the identity, language, and geographical distribution of the Abchas, see 7: Columbia U. RH1 Caucasia, category 116, pp. 385, 429-430./

/iii/

/From the Editor/

104 In his compilatory article, "Abkhazia and the Abkhaz," which is placed in this sixteenth book of the Zapiski Otdiela, Mr. M. G. Dzhanashvili, in introducing Grusian and Askhaz words, has rendered them by means of the letters of the Russian alphabet, with the addition of two letters from the French alphabet (h and q) and one letter from the Grusian alphabet (ღ), in order to indicate the pronunciation of these words somewhat more accurately. The letter h is introduced by the author to indicate that the letter of the Russian alphabet with which it stands is to be pronounced with aspiration; the letter q is meant to indicate the deep-guttural k, and the Grusian letter ღ for the indication of a sound somewhat similar to a combination of the Russian letters t and ts /transliterated as ts'/. At the request of Mr. Dzhanashvili, who had neglected to explain this in his foreword, the editor is bringing this to the attention of the readers in order to prevent any misunderstanding which might arise during the reading of the article "Abkhazia and the Abkhaz." /Only the transliterated form of the native terms is given in the translation; where the author has used a special orthography for native terms, a note will refer the reader to the foreign text. The remainder of the editor's note has been omitted, since it is not pertinent to this article./

/1/ Abkhazia and the Abkhaz
(Ethnographic Sketch)

Foreword

101 The Abkhaz have been known since ancient times. Pliny (29-79 A. D.) calls them absilae; Arrian (100-160 A. D.) calls them apsilai (აფსილაι); the old Grusian chronicles refer to them as aphshili and aphsari. The Abkhaz call themselves aphsua and their country aphsn; the present-day Grusians give them various names: abkhazi, apkhazi, aphkhazi.

A 101 199

/1 cont./ From a comparison of these names it is evident that the ethnic name of the Abkhaz was formed from aps, abs, aphs, aphsh. In the languages of the Caucasus, the sounds b, p, ph, m, v, and also s and sh, frequently alternate. Here are some examples: a-m-seba = a-v-seba = ap-h-she-pha /sic/, meaning "to fill"; suli = shuri, "soul"; m-ravali = b-ravali = b-reli = ph-reli, "many"; p-rke = b-rke, etc. Thus the identity of abs, aps, aphs, and absh, aps /sic/, and aphsh is beyond doubt. What, then, does abs or aphsh mean?

A 193

First of all it must be said that in the Abkhaz language nouns are preceded by "a," corresponding to the meaning of the article le or la in the French language. In compounds this "a" is often dropped. Let us, by way of example, take

A G 192

identical words in the Grusian and Abkhaz languages:

Grusian	Abkhaz	
khalakhi	a-khalakh	town
nathla	a-nathra	baptism
kambechi	a-kambash	buffalo
nana	a-nan	mother
kharthueli	a-khirthua	Grusian
lazi	a-laz	Laz
kaba	a-kaba	dress
/2/.		
kaltha	a-kaltha	tails /of a coat/
kherkhi	a-khuarkhi	file
makrateli	a-makratil	scissors
kibe	a-kiba	stairs, ladder
gemo	a-gema	taste
khvabi	a-khvab	kettle
ugheli (Svan /Swan/: ughu)	a-ughu	yoke
guli (Svan:gui)	a-gu	heart
zari	a-zar	lament, sobbing

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Frequently the Grusian language, too, has recourse to the method of forming nouns from verbal roots, with the addition at the end of the noun of the auxiliary verb li or ari (1)

1. ari = is; in the Grusian language and

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/2 cont./ in its dialects this verb appears either in the form a (e.g., katsi-a = it is a man), or in the form li (ara-li = is not), or as ri or re (akhlo-re - it is near). Of these, the form ari is the most frequent in Grusian; re, ri, ro, in Mingrel; in Svan, li, ari; and in Abkhaz, l, r.

A G 197

(3rd person singular indicative, meaning "is"). For example, deg or dgi means "stand, stand firm"; a-deg or a-dgi = stand up; a-dgi-li = solid ground, earth, dry land. In the same way, nuskhe = count, m-nuskhe-li = counting, a-m-nuskhe-li = accountant.

A G 197

So the root consists merely of phs or phsh, which in many languages of the Caucasus, including Abkhaz and Grusian, has various related meanings: river, water, moisture, soul, spring, etc. For example, in Circassian, phdze or phse means "river, water"; in Grusian phsha means "river, brook, spring-water," phshe-na or phshi-nva = breathing, sigh, smell; m-phshueni- breathing, soul, spirit; phsa = to pour, phseli = urine; in Abkhaz, aphs = soul, aphsha = wind, air; adzi /see foreign text/ = water, river, brook; adzi-khi = well; adzi-zhi = lake; amshin = sea, etc.

A 101 174

It is well known that many ancient peoples got their names from the waters on whose banks they lived. We will recall, for instance, from ancient Slavic history, the Pomoryane, Polaby, Buzhane, and others (2).

2. "Settling in Europe, the Slavs gave to the rivers those most ancient names, brought over by them from the East, which originally were used as designations for river, or water in general. In this way the names Sava, Drava, Odra (Oder), Ra, Upa, Oka, Don, Dunai, Dvina, are of Aryan origin, and related forms and roots with the above-mentioned general meaning are found in

/2 cont./

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Sanskrit; dhuni, dhūni (river) has retained its original meaning in the Caucasus, where among the Osset the forms dun and don refer to any river or body of water; among the Slavs, "Don" has become a proper name, and the form dun with the ending av has produced "Dunav," and then "Dunai." The word "Dunai," which serves as the proper name of the well-known river /the Danube/, is also still used as a name for all kinds of rivers, large and small. Examples can be found in Galician and Polish songs: "beyond the rivers -- beyond the dunai." (Afanas'ev, "Poeticheskiya vozzreniya slavyan na prirodu /Poetic views of the Slavs on nature/," II, 220).

/3/ We see the same thing in Georgia, too, where, in the majority of instances, the names of the provinces and of the tribes inhabiting them were formed from concepts meaning "river, spring, lake, water," etc. Thus, for instance, dcha means "spring, well, river"; dcha-ri = river; a-dchari= Adchara (in Turkish Georgia, Adzharia; dchari (river) = Dchar oblast (in Zakataly); dcha-ni means 'wells, rivers" -- dchan-ethi = Dchaneria (the Grusian name for all Turkish Georgia); dcharokhi = the river Dchorokh; dcha-la, "grove, river" -- dchala-didi = Dchaladidi (literally "large river").

Phsha = rivulet, Phsha-ethi = Pshaviia; Phsha = river near Gori, river in Guria, in Adzharia, and in other places; Abasha (the ancient Aphsha) = river in Imeretia; Phasisi (the ancient Phsisi) = the river Phaz, Phas (literally, "river"; phasisi is the genitive case).

From this same root comes a-phshi-li, exactly as a-dgi-li comes from dgi. Literally translated, a-phshi-li must mean "river." Thus I find the fullest resemblance between the

/3 cont./

101 174 names aphshili, phshaeli (Pshav), and Abasheli = Absheli (dweller on the banks of the river Abashi). The same meaning is also found in the word "Absari," in which, instead of the substantive verb ali, its other form ari appears (Abs-ari = Abs-ali); and since the Grusian ari, ali, and their abbreviated forms, ri, li, change to a and ua in Abkhaz (kharthu-ali = akhirthu-a = Grusian, guruli = a-gura-a = Gurian, me-gre-li = a-gru-a = Mingrel), we also have absua = Abkhaz, i.e., Grusian abshi-li (Abkhaz) = Abkhazian absu-a, with the same meaning.

From this same root are derived the names of many rivulets in Abkhazia, such as Phshitsa (a tributary of the Bzyb), Phshandra (near the village of Lykhny), the river Phstse, the river Khashu-Phse, the Phsbu, Tua-phse, etc.

/4/ The Circassians, of the same tribe as the Abkhaz and called adzikhi, adzigi, adzegi by the natives, got their name from the same root, dzi or dze, meaning "water, river, sea." As mentioned above, phse or phdze means "water, river" in Circassian; it has the same meaning in both Grusian and Abkhaz. Besides, in these latter languages from the same root were formed the words zghua or dzughva (Grusian, Mingrel and Svan) meaning "sea," adzizhi (Abkhaz) = lake, adzikhi (Abkhaz) = well, spring water. In this way, then the adzikhi (Circassians) came to be called by such a name. In exactly the same way, the word shapsugi from Grusian literally means "river-, living near the river" (sha-phsu-gi = sa-phsu-gi = sa-phshu-gi means in translation "where water -- there").

The most interesting of all is another word in Grusian, tba, meaning "lake." This word is found in the old literary monuments and today in the Mingrelian dialect and is pronounced the same way, toba; the Svan pronounce it tibar, sometimes tuibar, meaning "lake," as well as "deep ravine," and in general "deep hollow." In texts dated as early as the tenth century we find the name of the ancient Grusian province of Tbetha, in the center of which are the splendid ruins of the famous church of Tbetha, built by Ashot Kukh (died in 918). Tbetha means "lake region,

/4 cont./

●101 194 lakes"; Tbeli and tobeli (1) mean "little lake, lake-, located

1. "Tbeli" (pronounced "tobeli" in Mingrel) has been the title of the bishops of Tbetha since 918 A.D.

or living near a lake." And I can find no difference whatsoever between the Grusian Tobeli and the biblical Thobeli, which on Kipert's map occupy exactly the spot where the Grusian province of Tobetha (Tobeli) is located.

Greco-Roman authors sometimes refer to these Thobeli as Tibareni, and this name is also the Grusian Tobeli, or, in the Svan pronunciation, "Tibar." In the plural of this word we have "Tibareni," i.e., Tibarians = lake-dwellers. Hecataeus (ca. 550 B.C.) calls them Tipanisi (Tipanisse), which is a genitive plural and in Grusian means "those of the lakes." The Greco-Roman authors consider the Tipanisi, Tibareny, to be a people related to the Moskhi and the Kolkhi. From this same root we now have a multitude of /5/ names such as Tobarovani (rich in lakes), Lake Taparavan; Tobanieri (lake-), village in Imeretia (near Kutais); Toba-qure (lake-bay), village in Mingrelia; Didi-tba, great lake, near Tsarskie Kolodtsy; Tubanis-tba, lakish-lake, in the Akhalkalaki uyezd; Tqe-toba (forest-lake) in the Zakataly okrug, and others.

Reserving the right to return on some other occasion to a more detailed exposition of my views on the origin of the ethnic names of the Kartvelian people, I shall continue now with a brief historical sketch of Abkhazia.

195 The Grusian chronicles, the authenticity and ancientness of which were refuted by the late K.P.Patkanov, but which are fully substantiated anew by the discovered Grusian chronicle of the first half of the tenth century, testify that the propagator of Christianity in Abkhazia was Simon the Canaanite, who was in Georgia together with the apostle Andrew. Both apostles entered Adzharia, from where Andrew set out for Meskhetia (to Akhaltsikh),

[749] b) The Cherkess and Abkhaz

C 101 A 101 A 648 175 C 101 648 K 167 A 142

The Cherkess are called Kerketai, Kerketioi, Kerketaioi, Syndyi, Zygoi, Zinchoi by the Latin and Greek authors of antiquity; the Abkhaz are called the Apsil by Pliny (29 to 70 A.D.) and Arrian (100 to 160 A.D), Ap'šili and Ap'sari in Georgian chronicles: Abkhazia was dependent on Georgia during the first few centuries after Christ and afterwards on Lazia; in 786 it became an independent kingdom and was united again with Georgia by Bagrat III (980 to 1014) by marriage. Later it again achieved independence under the house of Shervashidze until the Russians occupied it, first the southern part, Samurzakhan, in 1845, and the rest of Abkhazia in 1863. The Cherkess are supposed to have occupied the northern foreland to a point beyond the Kuma, but later [750] [Fig. 441 appears here] to have been pushed back over the Terek, the Kuban, and the Malka rivers by the Tatars and, since 1777, by the Russians. As a result of the Tatar pressure the Cherkess tribes along the coast of the Black Sea had moved from there in the fourteenth century and pushed in among the Nogai, Karachi, and Taulu, in the Kabarda district, from which they derive their present name. After the suppression of the revolt in Dagestan and, in the autumn of 1864, the decisive defeat of the Cherkess, who had been offering stubborn resistance for decades, most of them, over 400,000, emigrated together with many Abkhaz, including the entire Ubykh tribe, to Asia Minor, Syria, and the Balkan peninsula.

[751] The Abkhaz (see Fig. 441) are physically of medium height, powerful build, and wiry. The skull

A 181 [751 cont.] Abkhaz are similarly endowed, but are distinguished from the former by greater irritability, instability, garrulity, politeness, and, like the Mingrel, are notorious thieves. [Fig. 442 appears here.]

A 101 [621] [619] The Abkhaz now consist of 24 or 25 kin groups or communities; as tribes, the following have been mentioned earlier: the Ubykh between Khamise and Shakhe, the Abadzekh between Pshekups and Byelaya, the Dzhigeth between Shakhe and Mzymta; farther south up to the Bzyb, the Bzubb, up to the Kodor, the true Abkhaz, and in their hinterland the Tsebeldin; up to the Galisga, the Abshav and, bordering on Mingrelia, the Samurzakhan.

A 99 177 [302] Dress. The Abkhaz women wear Cherkess, or nowadays usually European, clothing (see Fig. 443), the men the Cherkess coat (see Fig. 441); they usually shave the head bare.

C 291 A [177] The Cherkess attire for men has spread widely among the Cossacks and [752] [Fig. 443 appears here] through all of Caucasia as far as the lowland Georgians in the south, and the women's attire has been adopted by the neighboring Abkhaz, Karachai, and Osset. The men's costume (see Fig. 442) consists of a short (yana) of white linen or red taffeta, baggy pants, a silk embroidered undergarment with a collar, a long robe (tsié) open at the chest, made of black or gray cloth, with cartridge pockets (khazyr) on the breast, narrow belt strap, leather leggings, sandals of leather or linden bark, cap (papakh) of white or black sheepskin (see Fig. 444), and in addition, for bad weather, a black coat (tsauka, burka) of goat and sheep wool, with a hood (g'etapt) that is draped around in such a manner that the right arm remains free. They cut their hair off short, leaving only a braided tuft (haidar). Out-of-doors they carry a dagger (kama, see Fig. 449) on the belt, and from a sword-belt they hang a saber, the blade of which is often Damascus, Khorassan, Hungarian, or Lezgin work and which is often inlayed with silver or gold on a black background, as are also the studs of the horse's harness and other parts of the armament. This further consists of: pistol (see Fig. 450), flintlock rifle with

C 302 C 411 C [439] [495]

3: Janashia I-5 (ca. 1900) 1937 RI3 Abkhas RI3
Adzvibzha

already collected for the writing of a full-size monograph dealing with the religious beliefs and customs of the K'art's, Ibers, and Svans. However, after some reflection I decided that the time was not ripe for such a task as some necessary data were lacking and I therefore decided to publish only the notes. Here and there, however, I have not been able to restrain myself from touching upon certain considerations and inquiries belonging to the larger plane, and these have overflowed in the form of footnotes.

The founders of Christianity, realizing that it was not so easy after all to eradicate from the consciousness of the majority of the population religious beliefs and rites observed for thousands of years, endeavoured to transform them, by wrapping them up in their own clothing and so adapting them to the Christian feasts and saints; thus they established their own annual festivals. Wherever possible I have followed in my account the established order of church festivals.

I should further point out that all the material herein described was collected in one village only, namely, Adzvibzha, in southern Abkhasia (the province of Abzhua), which, according both to Georgian and foreign (for instance, of the missionary A. Lamberti) historical sources constituted until the second half of the seventeenth century, part of Megrelia. This accounts for the fact that the Megrelian influence is so strongly noticeable. I think it is quite possible that some of the beliefs herein described may be capable of a different interpretation in Northern Abkhasia.

I begin my notes with Àyt'ar. In the first place, however, it will be expedient to explain my views on the chief deity *antswd*,* God.

Antswd is a compound word, consisting of *an*, "mother," and *tswa* (*ratswd*)—"many," which together denote "many mothers" or simply "mothers"; the word is thus in the plural form.[1] "In a formal or grammatical sense," says Dcharaia, "it is not an error; only the word 'mother' forms in the plural *antswa* and 'God'—*antswd*, i.e. the difference is in the accent. But in colloquial speech both words,

* The underlined *tsw* is a trigraph representing a sound uttered with one articulative effort or breath impulse, of which the digraph "*ts*" represents the front lingual affricate equivalent to German "*z*" (*Zeit*, time), and the labial semi-vowel "*w*", the labialization of the preceding "*ts*". "*Tsw*" thus represents a labialized variety of "*ts*". See N. Y. Marr, *The Abkhasian Analytical Alphabet* (in Russian), Leningrad, 1928, p. 31. [Translator's Note.]

[1] It would be premature at this stage to enter into the question of the identification of the conception "god", in Abkhasian, with "mother", and any attempt to give a morphological explanation of the form, which is incontestably the plural in *-tswa*, with the aid of the Abkhasian word *ratswa* would be superfluous (see N. Marr, *Definition of the Language of the Second Category of the Achaemenian Cuneiform Inscriptions* (in Russian), in *Zapiski* (Bulletin) of the Eastern Branch of the Imperial Russian Archæological Society, St. Petersburg, 1915, §62. See also his *On the Origin of the Name Anapa* (in Russian). It is the usual linguistic method of the Abkhasians to interpret everything, even suffixes, such as the plural termination *-tswa* in the above instance, by means of the Abkhasian speech, with the aid of the Abkhasian words that survive to this day. [Note by the Editor of the *Kristianskii Vostok*.]

3: Janashia I-5 (ca. 1900) 1937 RI3 Abkhas RI3
Adzvibzha

himself, by placing before the "icon" also the amount he was to pay to the opponent.

Muhammadans also take the propitiatory oath at Ilori, together with the Christians.[1]

There are many stories current about the power of the Ilori "icon" to work miracles. I learned one of them from the lips of Biram Tkhazou and Seyt Zhania.

"In ancient times the Ilori 'icon' determined all the disputes of human mortals in the following manner. High up in the centre of the church, hung the golden scales of Justice. Under these scales stood the suitors, praying zealously to the Ilori 'icon', who inclined the scale over the head of the righteous. Knowing this, Abkhasians would not venture to break the law or wrong one another; peace and happiness reigned upon the earth. But men are cunning; an impious Abkhaz decided to deceive the great Ilori 'icon'. He owed a neighbour of his a hundred *manat'i* (= rubles) which he would not pay. The creditor complained. They both went to Ilori. When they appeared before the 'icon', the debtor handed to his creditor his staff which contained the hundred *manat'i*. The scale inclined towards the creditor, thus acquitting him of the charge. He took back his staff and left the church. The Ilori 'icon' was 'offended' and because of this fraudulence on the part of one Abkhaz it punished the entire people: the 'icon' took the scales of Justice to heaven for ever."

In ancient times the Ilori "icon" provided oxen for itself on the eve of the wake festival. The Commission assured me that eye-witnesses of this miracle were still living in Abkhasia, but none knew their names. As this providing of the oxen is described by A. Lamberti in the manner in which the Abkhasians relate it to-day, I will quote the description from his work.[2]

"On November 20th[3] they celebrate St. George's Day. A superstition prevails among the people that this celebrated martyr, on this day, procures for himself an ox from the neighbourhood and brings it by night into the Ilori Church dedicated to him. This church is held in great esteem, not only by all the Megrels, but by the neighbouring peoples also. Therefore it is very rich in gold and silver[4]—the icons are all made of these metals and are adorned, too, with precious stones; and even the doors are mounted in thick sheets of silver. So revered is this church by all the people, that, although situated

[1] In Northern Abkhasia *Dadwsp'sh* is endowed with a similar power.

[2] A. Lamberti lived as a missionary for eighteen years in Megrelia (1635–1653), and, according to him (and also to other sources), the present-day southern Abkhasia (Abzhua) constituted then part of Megrelia, the northern boundary being the River Kodor.

[3] The 10th of our (old) style.—N. J.

[4] At the present time, too, it is the wealthiest and the most influential of all the churches of Abkhasia.—N. J.